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Editor's Foreword

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Editor's Foreword

The *China Quarterly* featured in its inaugural issue a debate between Karl A. Wittfogel (1960) and Benjamin Schwartz (1960). The issue of the debate was defined by Wittfogel, a member of the Committee of One Million Against the Admission of Communist China to the United Nations (Kubek, n.d.), and academically renowned for his study of "Oriental Despotism" and what he called "the doctrine and strategy of the totalitarian revolution" (1960: 30). For Wittfogel, to prove that Mao Ze-dong had not contributed anything "original" to Marxism-Leninism was to prove that Mao was a willing tool of international Communism and that the Chinese revolution was the result of an international conspiracy manipulated from Moscow. Wittfogel titled his article "The Legend of 'Maoism'."

If Wittfogel spoke for the political right in American China studies, Schwartz spoke for the liberal center in his "The Legend of 'The Legend of 'Maoism''". Schwartz's emphasis, like that of his colleagues John Fairbank and Conrad Brandt, was on Mao's "departures" from Marxism-Leninism, the Chinese context of the communist revolution, and continuities between China's past and her present.

The left was not party to this debate. There was, in fact, no audible left in American China studies in 1960, for the progressives and Marxists of the Institute of Pacific Relations had earlier been silenced by the demagogic assault of McCarthyism. The perception of Chinese revolutionaries that the Revolution was above all a class struggle by oppressed people against the twin enemies of imperialism and feudalism, therefore, received no consideration in this debate. Controversies in American China scholarship of the 1950s and early 1960s were strictly between the right and the liberal center. Their forum in the 1960s was the *China Quarterly*.

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published at that time by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which has since been identified by Victor Marchetti (1974 68), among others, as an organization under CIA influence.

In time, the liberal view of Mao as above all "Chinese," and Marxist only in name but not in substance, became the established interpretation. That view, at least, returned the revolution to the chapters of Chinese history, from the pages of the story of international Communism. However, the liberal view did more than merely place the revolution in its historical context, it also denied the Marxist and class content of the revolution, and made it and Mao Ze-dong thought safely and merely "Chinese," of relevance only to "the Chinese."

But the Revolution was unmistakably a class revolution, and Chinese Communists remain convinced that they are followers not only of Mao but also of Marxism. Are we to think, as Schwartz and others tell us, that the Chinese Communist Party is completely misguided, or else utterly cynical, about the real content of the Marxism that it upholds? That Mao Ze-dong thought resembles Marxism only in vocabulary but not in actual content? Or can it be that our established scholarship has overstated its case?

In this issue of *Modern China* Richard Pfeffer in his article raises these and other questions; and presents an analysis of some common threads in Marxism and the thought of Mao. Schwartz's rejoinder, "The Essence of Marxism Revisited," follows Pfeffer's article to make up this first segment of our symposium on Mao and Marx.

It is our hope that this exchange and others to follow will contribute to a reexamination by our profession of the questions of the content of Marxism, of the thought of Mao, and of the relationship between the two. The symposium hopefully will be able to proceed without the encumbrance of the conspiracy thesis and rigid anticommunism of the 1950s and early 1960s.

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—Philip C. C. Huang